

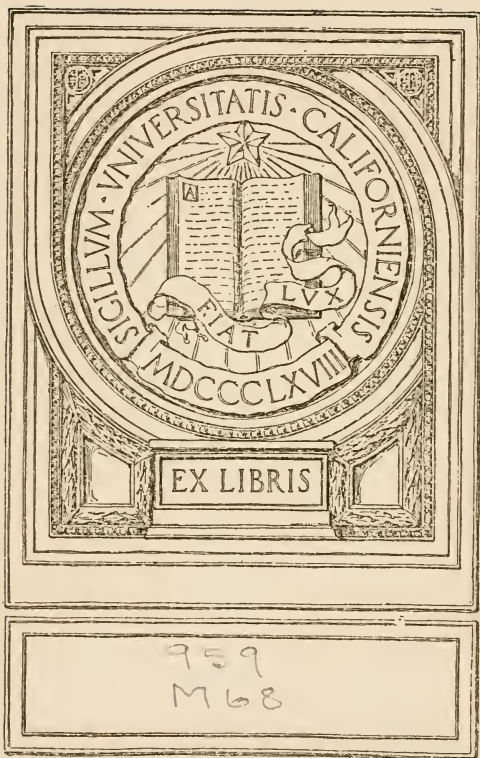
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POEMS

STEWART MITCHELL



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POEMS

POEMS

By
STEWART MITCHELL



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STEWART MITCHELL

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To

MRS. DANIEL HENRY HOLMES

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[v]

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POEMS



ASTARTE

For D. G. P.

Poised on the crescent moon, she stands serene,
Whose eyes from purple into violet pale,
As ever she lets fall the drifting veil
Clouding her beauty with its twilight sheen;
Hers are grey breasts death laid his lips between
Lest ever any subtle lover quail
Before her kiss, remembering life, and fail
To taste the flesh no eyes live, having seen.

Remorseless to the end of time, she waits
On tides none other ears than hers divine,
Knowing all roads lead last unto the gates
That swing into the silence of her shrine:
Where crushed beneath her feet, once pitiless fates,
Like sleeping serpents round her ankles twine.

A LADY

She follows men with calm, sagacious eyes,
Watching them falter, looking on her smile;
Gazes as never yet were thought so vile,
Or lust so strange that she could not surmise;
Out of her contemplation seem to rise
Visions of vanished life no studied guile
Of love made other than a weary while,
For her whom sinister gods had wrought so wise.

Standing before her face men long for sleep
Lulled in the arms of hidden luxuries:
Look as through twilight, feel the cool flesh creep,
Sensing the touch of sudden mysteries,
Strip naked unto grey winds, and plunge steep
Into the shadowed coil of treacherous seas.

POSTSCRIPT

—Considering which, scuttle from dust and heat;
Yet not to thought, for ghastly shapes lurk there,
Octopus-like, to snatch you by the hair—
Better the blinding road and bloody feet.
Just between truth and falsehood, lies a neat
Scarce travelled path, where your imperial air
Might vegetate in vacancy, and dare
To taste all passions, buy the best, and eat.

First of all wordly wise men spake Saint Paul:
Diversities of gifts? Indeed, there are
All manner of gifts—by which men rise or fall.
Though neither good nor evil take them far,
You, only, should thank God, for not to all
A star was given—much less so steady a star.

A FAREWELL

For E. E. C.

Nay: by this desolate sea our troubled ways
Shall separate for ever; swift hath sped
The hour of youth, and yet to hang the head,
Lamenting lost things of departed days,
Were only from that shadow land to raise,
A wraith, that whispering of the quiet dead,
Would mimic the strange life of love; instead,
Let us relent and hail the past with praise.

Go, then; and should inevitable fate
Lead us at last into a world, where men
Strive for the laurel and applause no more,
Whither the soul takes silence for its mate,
There might we meet, and, smiling, once again
Clasp hands and part upon some wind-swept
shore.

Cambridge.

A PURITAN

Ever toward morning looking, does she stand,
Where tides of trade and venture tireless beat
Round the firm sanctuary of her feet,
Gazing afar with vacant eyes, her bland
Bronze lips unconscious of the lifted hand
That beckons men unto her judgment seat,
Here where the pilgrims of all nations meet,
Luring their hearts into her promised land.

She will not learn to love men for their strange
Unsteady ways—forgets the brave are sprung
Out of men proud and wonderful to range
The whole world. Hope like hers has never sung,
But mutely waits the old, false dawn of change:
With eyes that see not, lips that lack their tongue.

VISION OF LIFE

For G. H. T.

Who loves the world is amorous of its pain,
Gathers its faded flowers for his own,
Pale, fragile petals pitiless winds have blown
Over the earth and back to him again;
Deep in his heart the desolate refrain
Of them who reap where other men have sown
Breaks in like boundless waters, as alone
He looks on them who harvest the grey plain.

Yet ever with the night he seems to see
Along the uplands warrior hosts that ride
Like gods to battle whither blind fate wills;
Then, from a silence, hearkens distantly
Tumultuous trumpets sounding—far and wide
Waving their scarlet splendour through the hills.

SALUTATION

I would that you were here to-night, your eyes,
Speaking a soul of mingled love and fear—
Dread such as even gods, they say, hold dear,
Love wary of each fortune's swift surprise.
Go with me now, if ever: the way lies
Through deep, thick darkness where the path drops
sheer
Into the night of life, whence we shall hear
Only confused and troubled voices rise.

Yours be my body—of desires as deep
As ever have been whispered of the soul;
Yours, too, my gods: I would have such as keep
A ceaseless vigil, nor relax one toll
Of tribute—nor, as better-loved gods, sleep,
For that they have appointed each his goal.

Camp Sheridan, Alabama.

IN MEMORIAM

D. H. M.

Out of midsummer moonlight at my bed
From troubled dreams I thought I saw you rise,
And fix me with your unforgotten eyes,
Still wonderful, as when you were not dead.
And though you only smiled and turned your head
Against the bitter scorn of my disguise,
Behind the swift despair of your surmise,
Pity more terrible than death I read.

Then as you looked as if to turn away,
Dawn waited on us from the dusk a spell
Lest you should whisper of inviolate things;
Till down the obscure twilight before day,
I heard upon the tide of your farewell
A rumour of inevitable wings.

DUST AND SHADOW

For E. M. J.

All scattered souls she gleans unto her sheaf,
Inviolatè death, grave deity of rest,
Before whose eyes all past deeds seem the best
That ever might have been, though envious grief
Light her proud torch and lustrous in the brief
Still time before the night when fades the west
Toward where illimitable skies suggest
Dear memories of beauty past belief.

Even as one to battle come who stands
Aloof a spell, beholding friend and foe
Clashing in conflict till his soul commands
He too, press on whither the trumpets blow,
I lift my eyes where over wasted lands,
The dust and shadow of life drift to and fro.

CARNIVAL

So much for our romance; where were an end,
Of sorrow for those banished sons of earth?
Tears wait on laughter with a sullen mirth,
As all things beautiful on dust attend.
Sunlight and shadow touch their hearts to blend,
Into such doubtful dusk that any dearth
Of darkness dooms the truant from his birth
To penance against which no hopes defend.

Sooner or later; wherefore with calm eyes,
And patient hands, and smiling lips they wait,
Who do not count themselves in glory wise,
Nor serve their tribulation with their hate;
The very stars take counsel in the skies,
To learn their orbits from the lips of fate.

A CHARACTER

Only reflected sunlight reached that room,
Flashing from western windows—counterfeit
Ever the twilight where we two would sit
And curse the common rout amid the gloom.
Tall candles watched us, though their scented bloom
Glowed steadily as if their stolid wit
Heard what we said, not making much of it,
Stifling, like patient torches in a tomb.

Grave Buddha, squatting on a home-made shrine,
Looked as if never yet were fact so odd,
But thought could make its purposes divine;
Seemed to remember others who would nod
Approval each to each over their wine—
Like mice between the grey paws of their god.

CHINA

Well may you smile upon their pomp and power;
They come and go, these conquerors in their pride;
Long since have you beheld such, tide on tide,
Beat round your baffling wisdom; they shall lower
Only their moment, and you still shall tower
Over the restless ages, looking wide
Upon their thousand kingdoms that have died—
Like Buddha, throned upon his lotus flower.

Long since yours was the glory to be strong,
Yet for this final peace of bended knees,
You have disowned your folly, and made song
To Beauty, out of Wisdom's mysteries,
As shall the prouder sons of these who throng
Upon you, fierce and futile as the seas.

A CRUCIFIX

This was the cross of God on which men's eyes
Dwelt with the love of dead divinity,
As they who by the desolate orient sea
In battle made their sainted sacrifice,
Dreaming their boundless striving should devise
A symbol whereby men might know that he
Who wins his way on earth to victory,
Thus in his consummated sorrow dies.

All things are sacred to that tender sight;
Time's ancient altars whence strange incense curled
Innocent to the unknown gods; the light
Of love is thine; faith's banner is unfurled,
Even where the farthest watchmen, through the
night,
Call on the cloud-wrapped ramparts of the world.

A THEORIST

To V. U.

They swarm about you with strong speech, and guile
That strenuous courage, only, can despise,
Bred of the silence of a heart grown wise
From doubt and patience through the weary while
Their malice has prevailed. Darkness and trial
Were bitter folly did their memory rise
To scorn the question lurking in your eyes,
Or cloud the sunlight of your sudden smile.

Knowing from whatsoever all things come
In that they have their ending, as their birth,
I marvel that you falter not, as some
Who wonder yet if any deed be worth
The toil of tongues inevitably dumb,
Of eyelids heavy with avenging earth.

SEA SIDE

You will not let me even touch your hair—

Not so much please your jester and your fool,

Now that your scorn no longer is the school
Of uncomplaining prudence and despair?

Yours is the chastity of autumn air

Blown like the liquid sunlight, clear and cool,

Steady as calm eyes resolute to rule

With the brave deeds that other men shall dare.

The waters tremble where the grey wind sets

His blue lips to the body of the sea,

Cloud over as your face, now it forgets

Some vague pledge common between such as we—
Startled to hear my tedious regrets

That you it was who were the death of me.

AFTER LOVE

Till love like wrath between their spirits fell
 Their feet were swift upon these hills, in haste
 But to have done with life—skirting the waste
And desolate places where no heart would dwell—
Lest fate should bid them falter for a spell
 By waters black and bitter to the taste,
 They turned to deserts where the winds effaced
All that the track of vagrant steps might tell.

Not always from the chalice they would choose,
 Men drink their last of life, even they who dare
To smile upon the cup they would refuse;
 Having come thus, stay you with me, and share
Whatever love may chance to gain or lose,
 Whatever reap of laughter or despair.

INSCRIPTION

For E. M. S.

For memory of those days when, side by side,
We heard the sea winds thunder on the sea,
Or, stretched on deck beneath the stars, would be
One with their loneliness, whilst far and wide
Grey moonlight would invade the violet-skied
Silence of heaven, even for memory
That comes not with so fleet a foot—for me
Remember until life be drowsy-eyed.

Whenever as with winds shall come the sound
Of waters wakened at the touch of dawn
Whenever amidst mountains you have found
Starlight and solitude to dwell upon,
Wherever you shall go the wide world round,
The memory of our lost days will have gone.

SATYRICON

So, too, were sunlight on the startled wings
Of gulls that stir and suddenly are gone
Seaward to crowd the scarlet gates of dawn
With clamour of their plaintive wanderings.
Light, utter as the surf of sunrise flings
Over the shoals of stars, this day has drawn
The veil of time, that Memnon look upon
Night of the morning unto which he sings.

Negligent of all dreams my spirit stands
Forgetting the inveterate feat that sped
These feet, unwilling, into wasted lands;
Watching grave eyes of laughter at the dead
Attend their eager lips with cautious hands—
Outwitting death with poison in their bread.

LEOPARDS

Light-footed leopards, casual and lean,
Pace tireless, prisoned in the loneliest part
Of the eternal twilight of my heart
Where I have stumbled on them—felt their keen
Quick bodies touch me, suddenly have seen
Numberless narrow eyes that never dart
Out of the night except my pulses start
For dread of what their watchfulness should mean.

That day—so have I said—when I shall fawn
Upon their supple strength, when they arise
To wait me with their welcome of warm breath,
I shall no more lament—though the cool dawn
Of beauty never drop upon these eyes—
Though my lips hunger for the kiss of death.

SEA MIST

For S. W.

They come down suddenly, grey wings that yearn
To touch the living waters of this sea
Yet hover and circle, dreaming there shall be
A time when death shall yield them, to discern
Shadow from sunlight once again—to burn
With the wine of life—its taste the ecstasy
They knew of old. Far through eternity,
They drift—and wait against that dear return.

Theirs is the voice of infinite regret
That having once seen love in distant lands,
They let her vanish, vainly would forget,
Since now their tardy wisdom understands—
Haunt these cold mists in terror, having met
Strange gods who smile at supplicating hands.

Camp Sheridan, Alabama.

LUCRETIUS

How ever should we turn till passion cease
To lord its swaggering mastery over the brain;
Till soul and body are no longer twain,
But twined together with one life increase,
Till out of their embrace a proud release
Spring for the spirit from its own disdain,
Till pleasure, gathering to her bosom pain,
Come penitent at last unto thy peace?

Far out before and after life extend
The pleading hands of unfulfilled desire,
Whose voiceless protest shall not have an end,
Though the remotest and last star expire;
Else what grave folly of the gods portend,
Beyond the stars, those flaming walls of fire?

PRELUDE

They weave against the stars their silent ways
Through leafage looped athwart the azure night,
Passing translucent globes of vaulted light
From tender hand to hand—their wisdom stays
The envious touch of fate through halcyon days,
Gives them to visions that seduce their sight
With shapes whose passing is a radiant flight,
Whose beauty is their own unstudied praise.

Lifting their full-lipped faces to the skies,
They fix the moon, shake their disheveled hair
Back from the gaze of fascinated eyes;
Falter a trice, as if their dreams would share,
All pain of all delight passions devise,
Turn from no heart if love but tarry there.

CONFESSIONAL

M. S. M.

Your love is my sole comrade: all my ways
Flower into song beneath the thought of you,
I know your touch in all that I would do,
Even as your image stands before my praise;
Yet oftentimes a dumb foreboding lays
Its chill hand on my heart, as if I knew,
Scorning the very prophecy, how few
Remain to us of glad and glorious days.

Though love perpetual as the sunlight seem,
Let us beware of love; all we adore
Lies in the shadow of that self-esteem
Grown desperate of all it suffered for;
One day you will not clasp me in your dream,
Neither shall I remember any more.

HELEN

For G. H. T.

Again the voices of the hunting horns,
Blown from the new moon, low upon the hills,
And the cold splendour of the evening star.

O Beauty, I have been thy votary, hung
The temple of my life with offerings—
Ever a vagrant after thy vanishing feet,
In those fair days and far when youth was mine.
Even now, left lonely at the end of life,
I seem to hear your voice upon the winds,
Behold you rising from the sunlit sea
Once more, to make all men your worshippers;
Yet, goddess, spare them love like mine, lest love
Fall ever on such sullen days as these!

To-morrow is as yesterday; to-day
No nearer than the morning when there stood
In Leda's palace, asking for this hand,
Tall Menelaus with his yellow hair;

HELEN

No nearer, now, than the first time these hands
Dared linger in caress upon the curls
Of him whose dark eyes laughed their love to mine.
'Tis only as if one short, restless sleep
Lay over the wide chasm of the years
Beyond which are lost faith and ruined Troy.
The night wind brings, as twenty summers since,
The silver-breasted swallows from the Nile,
To quiet Sparta, nestled in her hills,
Locked inland from the voices of the sea;
And far across the porticoes I hear
The ivory shuttle singing in the loom
Midst maidens' chatter, as in olden days;
And still men murmur as they pass me by:
"Lo, look on her, the wonder of the world,
Helen, that would have been the Trojan queen!"
I watch them fix their eyes upon my face
As they would keep it in their memory
For ever, and the very while they gaze,
I see the flames of Troy gleam in their eyes.
I think sometimes I have already passed
Into the kingdom of untroubled death,
Where wandering lonely amongst them I knew
In Hellas, or where Troy looked on the sea,

HELEN

Behold each shadow, as it passes by,
Shrink, half involuntarily, and turn,
To veil its face and vanish in the gloom.
Whilst out of that dim distance whence my steps
Are moving and to which they shall return
After an interval of endless years,
There comes a voice that hails me from afar:
"Art thou not Helen, dowered of the gods
With all that men can covet? Wert thou not
Created the most beautiful of earth
And is not beauty wisdom, wisdom power?
What hast thou done with their almighty gift?"
And then, ere I would answer, silence falls
Around me, and the dark divides, and I
See the blue twilight on the Spartan hills.

MOUNTAIN LAUREL

I

Why should I suddenly remember you,
Here, whilst I gather laurel in these mountains?
Were you not lying dead—
Far-off in that forgotten land—
I, of all men, would scarce occur to you,
Whose passing cost me
Rather a dread of fate, than sense of pain.
The thought is folly: dead men would remember
Only with laughter.
Only with laughter, light as ever the winds.

II

Insistently memory returns:
Starlight, grey plains, brown cities of tents,
And our chatter of life.
How I mocked the stern vision of duty
Spreading its giant wings

MOUNTAIN LAUREL

To shadow our souls:
I told you the feet of men,
Following after fate, are the sport of the gods—
Now you are dead,
And I live, and I gather me laurel!

III

Of old this was given to beauty,
To heroes, to dreamers of dreams—
Now it is nothing but laurel,
I crowd it into my arms,
I, who loved life, and still love;
Forgive me:
Only short of desire is it bitter to die.

IV

Look with me westward; over this highway came
Saints, warriors, fathers of nations,
Straining credulous eyes
Into their promised land.
Look with me westward; laugh with me at the Babel,

MOUNTAIN LAUREL

Those witless hands have created;
Not thus shall ye ever attain,
O dust of the dust,
Ye who scourge gods,
Who take counsel with wandering stars.

V

Thus have I suddenly remembered you,
Knee-deep in laurel fields amid these mountains,
Where winds blow westward from the lips of dawn—
Fearful, to feel your eyelids open on me.

FROM A GARDEN

Now even is the drowsy time of cities:
Smoke drifting out under the stars;
Streets restless, but silent.

Here, from the cloister of this garden,
Deep in the purple well of night
Walled with the elms like shadows of vast fountains
Bursting against the sky,
I listen down the wind
For the faint voice of summer.

With silence comes the memory of fate,
And dread, with solitude,
Ever to men who dwell
In cities of men.

This night, I know, the moon is on those mountains
Where I stood, long ago,
With nothing but the waking song of wind—

FROM A GARDEN

With cities strewn
Like spider-webs of stars along the plain.

Here, in the dusk,
A shadow more than night is on my heart !

LIBATION

I

Unto the gods I have poured out the lees:
Drunk to myself the draughts of living wine;
Thirsting as one that comes from desolate seas
Restless and scarred with foam,
Tasting in stinging winds, bitter with brine,
Hunger for home.

II

Light have I seen—and light has left me blind;
Angels of sudden strength have vanquished me;
Hope was my altar until laughter twined
Slowly around my heart,
Fingers I strangely knew would never be
Twisted apart.

LIBATION

III

Over the waters of their deep embrace,
Mountains have cast blue shafts of shadow, now
Twilight and summer falter face to face;
Knowing what dreams would dare,
Scornful of undiscovered days, I vow
Wine to despair.

INVOCATION

I

Swift, beautiful god of all beauty that gave
Love unto life, for a fire,
Lithe-limbed leader of them that are brave
In desire,
With eyes of the lightning, with jubilant, thunderous
lyre;

II

Dread, merciless god to whom pity were fear,
Lover of laughter and light,
Giant-winged deity, soaring up sheer
Out of night,
From tumult of chaos that swells with the surge of
your flight;

INVOCATION

III

Proud, fatal-eyed foeman whose arrows disdain
All but the serpents that keep
Strong-walled guard at the altars of pain,
In the deep
Impassable forests of twilight, and ruin, and sleep.

IV

Warm blood of our sacrifice smokes at your knees,
Chaliced in foam at your choice;
Calm-browed god, from all lands, from all seas,
At your voice,
We tremble to wait you, till touched of your wings,
we rejoice.

STARLIGHT

I

Strange that the eager heart should burn
So brief a space with doubtful fire,
Till, flaring suddenly, it turn
To dust, devoid of all desire;
Out of a world conceived of flame,
Drift back toward darkness whence it came.

II

Roaming as men will, to and fro
Over the earth, our spirits seek
The very fruits and flowers that blow
With beauty of the dust, and speak
Veiled words of warning that impart
Their hint of penance for the heart.

STARLIGHT

III

Ever to some our faces seem
Fleeter than shapes of shadows are:
Lost in the subtleties of dream,
Wanderers on a dying star,
Threading its labyrinths, to find
Escape for the despairing mind.

IV

Voiceless, aloof they dwell alone,
Brooding upon their vision, stand
Like proud, impassive gods of stone
Careless which stars may fade, which fanned
To splendour in the trackless skies,
Gleam on the granite of their eyes.

STARLIGHT

V

Jubilant, though all thought in vain
 Sound in the void of echoing deeps,
Some walk with passions that disdain
 Whatever fate the future keeps
Hidden beyond to lure them far,
Like homeless winds, from star to star.

VI

Their feet are swift and shod with light;
 Of vagrant flowers each twists his crown;
Their eyes are song—before their sight
 The mountains tremble and bow down;
Till death abandon his abyss
And seal their triumph with a kiss.

A GREEK

Cunningly chiseled
Into the intricate beauty of exquisite thought;
Skin polished smooth as if to tempt the touch,
Sinews suspended—
Caught in the careless grace of the pride of a god;
Lithe neck and sentient lips, and close-cropped curls.

Huge, smoky windows,
Shafts of hesitant sunlight,
Cautious footsteps.

Blank marble eyes
Wide with wonder,
Seeing these sons of God.

NEITH

Somehow the spirit of that day—
Rain-clouded streets and brooding air—
Determined me to live and dare,
Living, to laugh the world away.

As in a crystal dreamers see,
Out of unwinding mists, arise
The splendours of some paradise
Woven of gold and ivory;

Deep in the globe of thought I saw
Dawn from the tempestuous dust, that form
Toward which the endless ages storm
Uproarious—to break with awe.

Of all things ignorant, yet wise,
Sitting enthroned at life's last goal,
Dividing body from the soul,
Looking at each with flameless eyes.

NEITH

Immutable, unknown, unsung,
Through triumph and delight unearned,
Through sorrow undeserved, I learned
Salvation from thy wordless tongue.

Then, flying the embracing gloom
Of burnt-out days and parched desire
I built my soul an altar fire
Of laughter in the face of doom.

AUTUMN

Hoarse, cynic voices through the woods,
A glitter of black wings,
Webs of grey mist winding about the hills,
And all the world aflame.

Wild as this redolent splendour
Grows my desire;
Famished and faint at the feast of life,
I yet would have all in my dreams,
Power, and wisdom, and beauty
Gathered into these arms—
And now another autumn is upon me.

Unto the last shall endure
Pride to break free,
To be strong;
Unto the last of all light,
These fallow skies are ablaze—
Life, too, is encircled with fire.

THALASSA

I

They have turned to the lure of the sea again
With the salt wind each in his face;
They have come from the way of the mountains,
like men
Whose power would go
Unto waters to know
Of the touch of the sea that is grace.

II

They have come to the sea from the strength of the
hills
From the lair of the winds, where the strong
Unchangeable silence of starlight instils
Desire in the heart
For the uttermost part
Of the sea, that is ancient of song.

THALASSA

III

Their dreams are of visions where mountains are one
With the way of the sea they shall keep;
Their thoughts, like the waters, would follow the sun
To the arms of the sea,
And yet ever would be
In the arms of the hills, in their sleep.

IV

Of those who go down from the hills to the sea
With the path of the winds for their feet,
The last long home of the heart of me,
Were a land that lies
In the lap of the skies,
Where the sea and the mountains meet.

A PHILOSOPHER

Twilight, his hunting ground of thought,
Found him with candles lighted,
Drawn blinds, and blazing fire.

Only in the grey tumult of cities
He doubted the purpose of man:
Covetous lips and lewd eyes,
Were these the hunger of God?

With nightfall he laughed at his fear
And walked with the saints—
Once he was tucked in bed;

Yet wakened, sometimes,
To the noise of winds.

APRIL NIGHT

Because my face has been a mask—
My tongue a laggard where alarms
Of life are loudest, would I ask
Deep sanctuary of your arms.

Because of them who scorn to hear
Because of eyes that could not see,
I turn to you who are most dear
Unto the hidden heart of me.

This trinket cross that cools my throat,
I kiss, lest futile things of speech,
Unwary deed, song out of note,
Mock at the stars I would not reach.

I trust your quiet love shall send
To gaudy life and death such peace
As waits for worlds to make an end,
As tells the upstart suns to cease.

ELEGY

How else than thus with song
Should men take leave of you—
How else than to be glad that you are dead—
No longer shall pursue
Their panic-stricken throng
With locks of lightning round your gorgon head?

Tempest grey clouds would know your dauntless
tread
Down any fearful sky.

Pressing my heart to the marble of your own,
I feel it turn to stone
With dread lest we should meet when I shall die.

EXPECTATION

Half-opened eyelids,
Patches of blue sunlight in the hills,
Big, lazy, braggart clouds,
Portentous asters,
Crackle of the darting wings,
Of glittering dragon flies.

The drone of summer—
Windless, naked seas.

Life cast into the scales against your smile.

A TOWER

I

I heard her sing at eventide
Sing when the stormy evening shed
An amber twilight far and wide,
Sing though her lover late had died,
Sing, in the castle with the dead.

II

Hers was a purple mist of walls
And towers that loomed above the plain;
Nor torchlit mirth of banquet halls,
Nor woodlands loud with hunting calls,
Tempted this lady of disdain.

A TOWER

III

Ever with nightfall would she wait,
Watching the winding royal road,
Till some fair warrior, riding late,
Sounded his horn beneath her gate,
Praying the boon of night's abode.

IV

Wonderful was her way with sleep;
They who have sought her castled crest,
Lie in a slumber even as deep
As theirs who never stir, but keep,
Mindless of men, their peace with rest.

V

Rumour had given her eyes a name,
Woven of the wonder of their guile;
Her lips were ribbons of red flame;
Out of her voiceless laughter came
Death to the living in a smile.

A TOWER

VI

How should a lady wed with song,
Twisting pale roses in her hair?
Deep though her dungeon be, and strong,
Light though her footstep, life is long
Even to beauty, everywhere.

VII

Slowly the story of her face,
Living on lips that never met
Hers in their life and death embrace,
Made of her lair a pilgrim place,
Closed to the world men would forget.

VIII

Twain are the gods whose love is greed
To gather life with ruthless hands:
Christ, with the cross where each shall bleed,
Lust, with her flaming eyes, to lead
All who but look, through doubtful lands.

A TOWER

IX

Singing she sits till eventide

Swallow the road where knights go by,
Waving a crimson scarf, the pride
Of him who late lay at her side—
Waving it wide against the sky.

A FIG TREE

I

Murmurous, at evening, over the yellow-hilled
Lone land they came,
Crowding about his heels like timid sheep,
Whispering his name,
Peering at one another, pondering what they heard
Resolute, each, to keep
His every utterance as the chosen word.
Till, like a group of vagrant ghosts, they filled
The broad slope where he paused, full in the flame
Of the scarlet sunset, stood and never stirred,
Brooding—with feverish eyes.

II

Then suddenly, from somewhere in the crowd,
They heard him cry aloud:
“Shame to thy faith, fruitless, unworthy tree,
That canst not, even for me,
The Son of God, hungry, with weary feet,
Give anything to eat.

A FIG TREE

For that I came and that thou didst not see,
Henceforth for ever fruitless shalt thou be!"
They watched him, speaking, point as at a vile
Unholy thing—some thought they saw him smile.

III

Light-lipped is laughter: in a far-off age,
One turning his dim page,
Hungry in body and spirit for a text,
Paused, half perplexed;
Then rose, and took upon him to confute—
For this world, and the next—
All them whose faith had yielded God no fruit.

EASTER DAWN

I

Now is your altar desolate:
Of the vain feet that throng your shrine
Only the echoing footfalls wait
To keep companionship with mine.

II

How should they ever hold you dear
Till life shall be as love may please;
And part the incense of their fear
Clouding the pity of your knees?

III

Wayward your lips are still, as when
You counted them least frugal of
The tenderness you taught to men,
Ever the eldest in your love.

EASTER DAWN

IV

Lured of your bleeding hands and feet
Out of the dead I would arise;
Gird on the flesh again, to greet
The mist of acquiescent eyes.

V

Sound on the trumpets: the full moon
Of ancient festival is come;
The son of God is dead, and soon
Shall sanctify his martyrdom.

THE PHOENIX

They said the Phoenix would arise,
Out of the embers of its nest;
Under the welcome of their skies,
Find solace and abiding rest.

Some listened for the sound of wings,
But soon as ever pinion stirred,
It seemed the most confounding things
Had been expected of the bird.

Till shrewd opinion wondered whether,
Considering the skeptic owls,
It were not well to piece together
Some gentle paragon of fowls.

Despair fell to, and bit by bit,
From carcasses that failed to please,
Devised a creature that could sit
Most steadily in sheltered trees.

THE PHOENIX

And though it never stirs or sings,
Only the owls would wonder why
This silent Phoenix bred to wings
Should scorn the sunlight and the sky.

AN ALTAR

I

The past, the future are as one to you:
All we would do
With worship, all amend with prayer or praise,
Change not your ways;
Smiling on who beseech you, who adore
Your name no more,
You breathe, with equal breath,
On life and death.

II

They who have known you best have thought your
face
Light's dwelling place;
Have turned aside from hope that they should live
For love less fugitive,
Till your own dark and unrelenting eyes
Count them more wise,
Than such as meekly wait
The voice of fate.

AN ALTAR

III

Let the feet falter or the lips demand
Help of your hand,
Life, hesitant between divided ways,
Spends sunless days
Deliberate of silence, till at last
The choice slip past
For ever, and there remain,
Pleasure nor pain.

GOLDENROD

I

On the crest of this yellow surf,
Like blue smoke in the winds,
From swift night and the nearness of stars,
On wide, scarlet wings,
Has summer gone seaward.

II

Out of deep streets of cool sunlight,
From closed doors and glittering windows,
Passing with muffled voices and snatches of song,
From the langour of cities,
Into the arms of the morning,
Has summer departed.

III

Through the darkness of sky-lighted stairways,
With warm murmurs of hidden laughter,
They follow you now, Aphrodite.

EGO

Ever with evening gather the dead around me—
Quietly, with deep eyes—
Watching my mute surprise,
Gazing as if their secrets would astound me,
Should they but set their grey lips to mine ears—
Yet cautious, lest strange fears
Follow their feet with noiseless tread,
As out of the shadows of forgotten years
They come to me—these unreprouchful dead—
Come, calm with pride, seeing the future flower
Where once, in vanished days,
They, too, drank deep for joy of love and power,
Ere they betook them to these darkened ways.

Yet they do never take my hand
Speaking to me, or touch my blinded sight—
I do but idly stand
On this last crag of land,
Watching the sea and sky turn gold

EGO

When all the east, to-night,
Is one wide echo of light,
As if new morning rose upon the old.
Swift as men pass, their feet are swifter yet:
What though we think they sleep,
They never rest, but keep
The highway of the world, where they are met
In crowded ways we think the dead forget!

I looked once, long ago, on light like this,
And ever after, turned
Unto the East, and yearned
To know the mad enchantment of its kiss,
To find my home in that abiding bliss.
Here ever are we lost, ye pale immortals.
With flaming wings,
Out of contending light and darkness, springs
The tempest on the sea,
Whither the clouds fling back their threatening
portals,
Throw their arms wide, as they would welcome me!
Gloucester, 1917.

AT "MADAM BUTTERFLY"

Come, gather me into your arms:
Tears strain at my heart
As the moon at the tides of the sea;
Come, gather me into your arms,
And to peace.

Look: they who would love should be proud:
Should despise, nor remember, remorse or despair;
Go out unto sorrow with a song,
And follow the winds
Into the heart of the sun;
Like music their foot-falls,
Like laughter the pulse of their hearts.

Taking less of such love, men shall die.
But we who are fugitive
Over the world from all passion but peace,
Still hunger for rest in your arms.

SEA BURIAL

Close over him, faithful of death to keep
This last poor vigil where he lies alone;
Close over him.

When life is hope, and gods are gone to sleep,
Devotion unto worship shall atone;
Now that his eyes are cold and dim,
Close over him!

Who else should ask for him as we rejoice
And crowd the decks where the exultant land
Smells sweet and near.
Lost in our laughter were one feeble voice;
For him the deathless sea holds out her hand;
For him to whom no thing is dear,
Smells sweet and near.

POPPIES

I

Footsteps soft as fall the rose's
 Petals on a dewy lawn,
Shaken when the wind uncloses
 Golden gateways for the dawn.

Laughter light as is the swallows'
 Chatter in the evening sky,
Wafted upward from the hollows
 Where the limpid waters lie.

Weeping faint as is the willow's
 By the margin of the lake,
Trembling into tiny billows
 That the silent teardrops make.

Phantoms fitful and uncertain
 As the pearly autumn rain
Sweeping on in cloudy curtain
 Down the wide way of the plain.

POPPIES

II

Oh, unhappy now to waken
When the dream had scarce begun!
Out of gentle twilight taken
Into realms of burning sun.

Oh, unhappy now to find me
Lost 'neath heavens hot with noon;
All that fairyland behind me:
Poppy fields and rising moon!

Drawbridge and portcullis screeching
Bugles braying soon and late—
Who are they that come beseeching,
Calling at my castle gate?

Drive them hence, for they encumber
Days and nights with waking pain
Tell them that I lie in slumber
Under poppies wet with rain.

POPPIES

Who art thou that kneelest weeping
By the border of my bed?
Cease thou, for I was but sleeping—
Dreaming, only, and not dead.

III

Phantoms flitting and uncertain
Sweeping round the endless plain;
Autumn twilight's dusky curtain,
Drowsy poppies, drenched with rain.

WINE

Idly as gleaming bubbles rise
Like globes of sunlight in this glass,
As idly even do men pass,
A light of wonder in their eyes.

Though beauty lure them, love be strong,
Though from lost lands they turn their feet,
They come and go, with hearts that beat
Respondent to the surge of song.

Never is life or death too soon;
Never too late; they ebb and flow
As sleepless tides that yearn to know
The amorous mastery of the moon.

A HERO

I had put by
Your jewelled memory,
Thinking: though he should die,
Sorrow would be
Like mirth, for me.

Now, one by one,
I count our days apart,
Finger your cold, fine-spun,
Intricate art,
Here at my heart.

Let love lay waste
From bitter sky to sky,
Else with autumnal haste,
Even as I,
Wither and die.

OASIS

Come close his eyes and cross his hands
Like to a saint's above his breast.
So let him smile: he understands
The bitterness of life's last jest;
That one a stranger to all lands
So quietly should deign to rest.

Over the desert shall they go,
Over the desert and alight
Where golden tents reflect the glow
Of evening in the depth of night.

If he had smiled as one who said,
Farewell for ever unto men,
We had not loitered at his bed
Avoiding other eyes, as then;
We had not hoped that, being dead,
His like should never live again.

OASIS

Over the desert have they gone
Over the desert into night;
They tarry till the kiss of dawn
Shall lure them forward in their flight.

A MEMORY

Strange that on warp and woof of dreams
Fancy should weave the web of truth,
And yet this airy figment seems
Part of that half-forgotten youth,
Stolen from days I thought were sped
Out of the world—beyond the dead.

Smiled she not so when down the edge
Of evening we walked alone,
Hunting her flowers from hedge to hedge
That she might wear them as her own—
Or do I hold a hopeless tryst,
Here with a shadow shaped from mist?

Even as will crumpled rose leaves pent
By fingers we can never know,
Rouse with the richness of their scent
Thoughts of a summer long ago:
All the expanse of land and sea
Speaks in a thousand tongues to me.

A MEMORY

Over this coast of cliffs would form—
 Sprung from the ocean's frosty breath—
The blue-grey ramparts of the storm,
 Flashing with signal-fires of death;
Whilst with a murmur, far and wide
Swept in the low wind with the tide.

Often, at last, when hearts were dumb
 With fear of parting, would we wend
Our way through meadow lanes that come
 From nowhere and in nothing end,
Kissing until our hearts could please
To flout the rumour-haunted trees.

Till innocent as any day,
 One casual to other men,
Marked for her feet a separate way,
 Whither love turns not back again:
Lured of oblivious twilight, spun
Of meshes of the wind and sun.

A MEMORY

But is there any heart can keep
 Its vigil with the voiceless dead?
What if the spirit, waked from sleep,
 Never recall the words it said?
Dwell in forgetfulness, or be
Lost, in a last eternity?

WARRIORS

Here, for the marvel of the crowd,
They put you as if death were proud
Of honour, and would cry aloud
 All that the vanished flesh has done.
Yet, facing some of us, you seem
To look on men as from a dream,
Careless of whether they should deem
 All that you died for, lost or won.

Pride such as yours would scorn acclaim
Fawning your praise to gaudy fame,
Telling the story it were shame
 To look on you, and not surmise.
Would you from death, I wonder, dare
Once more to venture—even care?
You look—and fate lets fall her hair
 Over the answer in your eyes.

IPSWICH DUNES

I

Would I might tell you, "Comrade, fare you well
Into the darkness whither you have gone";
Bid you Godspeed, certain such spirits dwell
In lands where light were like eternal dawn.
Over these dunes with the last breath of day
Loiters the twilight as a lingering friend,
Lest fall his hand to turn away from me—
Touches these twisted strands of green and grey
To lonesome splendour, such as seems to lend
A glory to this land at summer's end,
An anguish to the silence of the sea.

II

If ever we could love them who are sped,
Out of the world with swift and trackless feet,
I should have known your England from my bed,
In fields of poppies sown through deep, green
wheat;

IPSWICH DUNES

Should scarce have lived those days as one who made,
A pilgrimage toward some unwonted shrine,
And all unknowing passed it by the way,
Forgetful on those hills with swallows strayed,
Through evening delicate as amber wine,
Where once you walked, or ever breath were mine,
Whither I came, and you long lost from day.

III

You who have gone a troubled way with song,
Scorn who would honour you and who forget.
Their foolish tears spare you no pang of wrong:
Their praise has never lightened sorrow yet.
Stretched on these dunes—white sand, sweet-smelling
bay,
I think I taste the draught of your disdain—
Only what you have told of Beauty, we,
Who love you best remember—turn away
From idle fancy and your age-old vain
Unprofitable comradeship with pain,
On wings of light, wings that desire the sea.

ARABIAN NIGHTS

As twilight with a whisper touched the sea,
Trailing the waters with her veil of grey,
Wave-worn and weary of the ocean, we
Saw land against the very heart of day;
Half-hidden in the afterglow, it lay
On the horizon like a lazy cloud
Its coasts encompassed with long lines of spray;
We spread the sails until the ship had ploughed
Unto the purple waters where the surf sang loud.

Between the cliffs by the faint stars we found
A gate of thunder—boldly sailing in
Watched the dark mountains slowly closing round,
Hearing hoarse echoes of the ocean's din
Melt into spirit voices, fleet and thin;
When, even as we cast our anchor nigh
Unto the hills where only night had been,
A city of gold rose suddenly on high
Like to the yellow light of morning in the sky.

ARABIAN NIGHTS

As if a god should take the skies for loom
Weaving with warp and woof of living fire,
So dawned our vision on those hills of gloom,
Breathing a gale of music like desire:
Grave, deep-toned trumpets, a triumphant lyre
Surging in answer to the songs of men.
We grasped our oars—but as the stars expire
To the kiss of day that splendour paled, and when
Last we looked back, those mountains slumbered
with night again.

DEPARTURE

Bring me, this evening, crimson wine
Such, as in twilight, seems to keep
Secrets of death in serpentine
Sinuous sleep.

Here will I drink my toast to-night,
Over this voiceless, storm-swept sea,
Bask in my pleasure, ere delight
Vanish from me.

Till the sea swallow earth, at last,
These lips of memory shall make
A whispering gallery of the past,
Love, for your sake.

LORRAINE

Westward lies home; my heart goes out to the west,
Lured to the memory of other skies,
Longs for the haven where its wings shall rest
Over against the slumber of the west,
Over against the night, with quiet eyes.

Eastward and westward through these hills have gone
Conquerors proudly since the world was young;
Faces that blanched and faltered in the dawn,
Only a memory, once they were gone,
Only a memory—and songs unsung.

They who have known this fatal land, and died:
Felt the throat thicken and the tired heart cease,
Dreaming that death would leave them thus, wide-
eyed,
Touched with the vanity of them who died
That Christ should find their martyrdom his
peace.

Ville au Val, France
October, 1918.

AUTUMN EVENING

Blown like the dust across my way,
There came and went as shadows do,
A phantom on the dusk of day,
A mask with laughter looking through.

Vision of memorable eyes,
Haunted by your regretful feet,
I pass you still, as ever skies
Of sundown flood this silent street.

Teach me the chaste, unchosen art,
Scorning the hope of bended knees,
To brush, like midnight, from my heart,
The terror of untravelled seas.

Then were the breath of God a flame,
To light the life his love would give,
Not leave the lips that lisp his name,
Cold, and forever fugitive.

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